

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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BUMPERS ON SMALL UTILITY VEHICLES AREN'T UTILITARIAN; MINOR BUMPS CAUSE DAMAGE COSTING THOUSANDS TO REPAIR

ARLINGTON, VA – Seven small utility vehicles, all 1998 models, allowed excessive damage in a series of four crash tests at 5 mph. Only the Subaru Forester and Jeep Wrangler sustained less than \$3,000 total damage. The worst performer, the Kia Sportage, allowed damage costing more than \$7,000 to repair. The Sportage's average damage per test was more than \$1,800. These are the findings of Insurance Institute for Highway Safety crash tests to gauge how well bumpers can prevent damage in minor impacts.

"Only the Forester performed well in the relatively easy flat-barrier impacts. The rest of the vehicles should have done as well," Institute President Brian O'Neill

DAMAGE REPAIR COSTS 1998 Small Utility Vehicles in Crash Tests at 5 Miles per Hour

	Front Into Barrier	Rear Into Barrier	Front Into Angle Barrier	Rear Into Pole	Total Damage	Average Damage per Test
Subaru Forester	\$9	\$0	\$894	\$1,304	\$2,207	\$552
Jeep Wrangler	\$0	\$1,173	\$351	\$1,066	\$2,590	\$648
Honda CR-V	\$908	\$776	\$497	\$1,017	\$3,198	\$800
Jeep Cherokee	\$529	\$687	\$1,257	\$1,304	\$3,777	\$944
Isuzu Amigo	\$594	\$1,394	\$1,355	\$1,712	\$5,055	\$1,264
Toyota RAV4	\$416	\$1,764	\$708	\$2,175	\$5,063	\$1,266
Kia Sportage	\$670	\$2,674	\$1,062	\$2,903	\$7,309	\$1,827

Repair costs reflect June 1998 prices

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points out. "And in the more demanding angle-barrier and pole tests, the bumpers on all of the small utility vehicles failed to prevent excessive damage. The cost to repair the damage to the Sportage after the four tests amounted to more than a third of the vehicle's purchase price."

"Manufacturers like to promote utility vehicles with an image of ruggedness," O'Neill also notes, "but they're far from rugged. The designers obviously paid little attention to the basic purpose of bumpers, which is to prevent damage in low-speed impacts. Instead, the designs of some of these vehicles guarantee increased damage in some crashes. Major culprits are the spare tires mounted on tailgates that protrude beyond the rear bumpers of most of the utility vehicles we tested — all but the Forester and Jeep Cherokee. In some rear-end crashes, this design means that, instead of the bumper making the first contact, the spare tire takes the impact. This leads to unnecessary damage to rear windows and tailgates, and the result is thousands of dollars being spent for repairs."

None of the small utility vehicles tested sustained less than \$1,000 damage in the rear-into-pole impact at 5 mph. The two vehicles that sustained more than \$2,000 damage in this test have rear-mounted spare tires. The Sportage sustained almost \$3,000 damage in this test alone. It sustained another \$2,674 damage in the rear-into-flat-barrier impact — by far the worst performance in this test.

The Institute's crash test series includes front and rear flat-barrier impacts plus two localized impacts, front-into-angle-barrier and rear-into-pole.

**End of two-page release on small utility vehicle bumpers.
Video news release Tuesday, July 21 at 1:00-1:30 p.m. EDT
(C) Galaxy 6/Transponder 5; crash test footage, related video**

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